current conditions. The gnome seemed shocked but after some meditation asked me to join the University group.

A few days later I was invited to the meeting of the committee of this group and was told that I had been elected a member of the committee and assigned to represent the party in the forthcoming students' meetings. The committee brushed aside my objection that I was unfamiliar with the party's views. Obviously I was picked up as a figurehead because of my reputation among students who did not belong to any organization. When I asked whether I was to represent the entire party or only its Bolshevik faction, I was told, "We have a common line—to open the University in the interest of the revolution and to keep it under control. You will represent both factions. The fight is between us and the Socialist Revolutionaries."

The Social Democratic party wanted to call off the academic strike throughout Russia and mobilize the students as the revolutionary element in the cities, whereas the Socialist Revolutionaries recommended continuing the strike and sending students into the villages for revolutionary work among the peasants. St. Petersburg University would be the first to vote on continuation or termination of the strike, and its decision might establish the pattern for other academic institutions.

The S-D strategy appealed to me. I visualized coming events as a revolt of urban crowds, in the style of the French Revolution and the Paris Commune of 1870, and liked the idea of the students staying in the city as auxiliary troops ready for action. I began to outline my future speech at once, completely forgetting that I had only four listeners and haranguing them as if I were addressing the general meeting. They had doubts about minor points, finding some of my arguments too conservative and others too idealistic, but they all agreed my speech would appeal to the bulk of the students. Thus the committee decided that, after making the keynote speech in the name of the party, I should also move its resolution and, if necessary, answer opponents. In short, the committee turned over the whole meeting to me.

FORUM OF THE REVOLUTION

In the crowded main hall of the University, black suits of the polytechnic schools mingled with gray University jackets. A conspicuous brown curtain hung behind the speaker's pulpit,[4] over the huge frame of the Tsar's portrait, destroyed in January.

[4] In the main hall of St. Petersburg University the chairman and speakers occupied a small elevated platform, like that of a preacher in Catholic and Protestant churches.